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ABSTRACT

This paper draws from a case study of first year district implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program in one of the largest districts in California. The paper focuses on the opportunities offered to teachers who work with mentors. Through the presentation of a selection of vignettes of teachers who worked with mentors, the paper suggests that the mentorship can provide the occasion for changing the norm of isolation to a norm of collegial assistance. Outcomes for teachers included companionship and assurance, access to models of teaching, adjustments in teaching practices, and, to a lesser extent, support for thinking about teaching. A secondary purpose of the paper was to describe some of the problems that several mentors encountered in asserting their role, such as the lack of organizational support, suspicion and jealousy from other teachers, and a dilemma about how to assert themselves. (Author)

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# OPPORTUNITIES OF A MENTORSHIP: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CALIFORNIA MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM

Judith Shulman

Paper presented at the annual meeting
of the American Educational Research Association
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ABSTRACT

This paper draws from a case study of first year district implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program in one of the largest districts in California. The paper focuses on the opportunities offered to teachers who work with mentors. Through the presentation of a selection of vignettes of teachers who worked with mentors, the paper suggests that the mentorship can provide the occasion for changing the norm of isolation to a norm of collegial assistance. Outcomes for teachers included companionship and assurance, access to models of teaching, adjustments in teaching practices, and, to a lesser extent, support for thinking about teaching. A secondary purpose of the paper was to describe some of the problems that several mentors encountered in asserting their role, such as the lack of organizational support, suspicion and jealousy from other teachers, and a dilemma about how to assert themselves.

# OPPORTUNITIES OF A MENTORSHIP:
# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLAIFORNIA MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM

> All I can say is that we need the mentor program desperately. New teachers need someone to bounce off ideas and say, "Yes, you can do it." With the way kids are coming to schools, teachers will be burned out quick if they don't know what they are doing.
> (Interview with novice teacher, April, 1985)

The comment of this new teacher is telling. A case can be made for the mentorship to support the induction of new teachers. But not only new teachers need support. Veterans burn out prematurely and leave the field, or simply lose their fervor and become ineffective. Other teachers are reassigned and begin to experience many of the anxieties of the novitiate all over again. A variety of strategies is typically suggested to address the problems of new, reassigned, and veteran teachers. Should the mentorship be among these?

Can a mentorship counteract the existing norms of isolation and autonomy that prevent teachers from seeking help from their colleagues? [1] Can mentor teachers introduce a new set of norms to encourage novices to seek support of skilled professionals? Can mentors use the opportunities of the mentorship to help teachers extend their thinking about their teaching practices? What are some of the problems that mentors face in their new roles? This paper draws from a comprehensive study of the California Mentor Teacher Program to address some of these questions.

## Background

The California Mentor Teacher Program (CMTP), a part of the

Educational Reform Act of 1983, opened opportunities for teachers to assert leadership in the teaching profession without going into administration. The intent of the legislation was to provide teachers with demonstrated ability to pursue excellence and to remain in teaching. The regulations specified that the primary function of mentor teachers was to assist and guide new teachers. Mentor teachers may also assist and guide experienced teachers, provide staff development, and "develop special curriculum;" they could not evaluate other teachers.

The legislation, which took effect on January 1, 1984, authorized the payment of a stipend of $4000 per year per teacher for up to 5% of the teachers in a participating district. Another $2000 per mentor per year was provided to districts to defray other costs of operations, which included freedom of movement by release time and substitute teachers, and access to special resources like training, materials, and equipment; mentors were required to continue teaching students at least 60 percent of the time.

In 1984 the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, in cooperation with the California State Department of Education, began a series of studies of district implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program (CMTP). The investigation included two surveys of participating districts and ten case studies.

## Methodology

The data for this paper are drawn from one of the ten case studies (Shulman, Hanson, and King, 1985). The district, one of the largest in California, was unusual in its policy of using the

mentorship to provide assistance to teachers. This use of mentors' skills contrasted with the policies of a majority of districts whose mentors served as curriculum developers (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986). Though the mentors were encouraged to define their own activities, they were urged to provide demonstration lessons as a "way to cut down on teachers' isolation."

The study employed a combination of quantitative survey methodology and qualitative fieldwork. Interview and questionnaire data from 22 pairs of mentors and teachers comprised the main sources of data. Each teacher interviewed was selected by the mentors as representing the "one with whom the mentor had worked most extensively during the 1984-1985 school year." Interviews dealt with a range of issues; some measures were repeated in two or more interviews to obtain triangulation of views on some matters or to obtain accounts from both ends of the relationship.

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed using several approaches. (For a complete account of the analysis procedures, see Shulman and Hanson, 1986.) After the interview data with teachers were collected, the data were summarized in vignettes that characterized each teacher's relationship with his or her mentor in a narrative form. Recurring themes and patterns were identified, such as the kinds of outcomes that teachers gained from their relationships with their mentors. These outcomes were then classified into eight categories, progressing from less to more assistance from the mentors (see Table 1).

Themes and patterns that described the mentors' experience of

asserting their new role were also identified. Assertions were generated and checked for validity by seeking confirming evidence as well as disconfirming evidence. I classified the problems that mentors encountered into seven categories.

The Mentor-Teacher Relationship

We turn first to the human element of the mentors' task -- the direct relationship between mentor teachers and their colleagues. I will argue that the most substantial contribution mentors can make is to help other teachers extend their thinking about their educational practices. Existing norms and lack of support, however, often prevent mentors from providing this kind of assistance. Representative accounts from the case study will serve to describe the circumstances of the new reform from the perspective of the participants involved.

The six vignettes below illustrate the range of opportunities and challenges for which the mentorship has demonstrated promise. The first two are cases of neophyte teachers in their first two years, just learning the ropes. The second two cases are about veteran teachers who become neophytes by moving into new schools or by teaching new subject areas. The third pair of cases describe veterans themselves who have had very little change in the course of a twenty or thirty year career.

I select this range of cases because of what they can teach us regarding how extensive are the situations in which teachers can assist their peers, if only provided a structure in which this is permitted. I use these cases to illustrate what is possible rather than to assert what is typical. Case studies are

particularly useful in this context to make us aware of the range of possible alternatives in a mentor program.

## The Neophytes

### Dana

It was difficult to tell that Dana was a first year teacher. Her room looked like she had collected things for years. It was filled with interesting pictures and children's work; learning centers were situated in different areas; and signs of a developed management system were present. The classroom was inviting.

Dana admitted that she did not feel like a novice. In fact, the principal frequently brought visitors to her room to show them that "some first year teachers have it all together." When asked, Dana attributed much of her success to the support that mentor teachers had given her.

On the first day of school, Dana received a notice that a mentor from another school had volunteered to be her "buddy"; the mentor encouraged her to call. Without hesitation Dana called the mentor and introduced herself. Through the year Dana had "five or six phone conversations" with the mentor, getting recommendations for books for specific students, interesting workshops to attend, and tips on "how to make the class more exciting." The mentor also came to observe Dana on two occasions.

> "She has given me a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement. She has helped me to be motivated to keep up high levels of learning."

During the observations, the mentor gave Dana feedback on her "clinical teaching and classroom management techniques." She also introduced Dana to "a lot of materials available to teachers" and gave her some useful units with worksheets. Finally, Dana said that the mentor helped her plan.

> "[The mentor] helped me in planning so that there is a purpose for teaching everything we do. That is easy to lose sight of."

Dana said that other mentors on her staff have also been helpful. They were always ready to talk with her, help with problems, share materials, etc. She felt

> "...fortunate to be in a district which provided so much support to new teachers. I've been lucky."

Rachel

After two years of teaching different grade levels as a substitute at her school, Rachel was hired as a permanent teacher in the third grade. She felt lost at first. "I had asked people for help, but there wasn't time." Rachel realized that the two mentors in her building "had an obligation to help," but she hesitated to ask them.

> "I felt that my questions might seem obvious. Then I felt that I might as well feel stupid and risk doing it."

In January, Rachel contacted the mentors. She discussed her needs, which initially concerned "some behavior problems" in her classroom and some ideas for teaching language arts and math.

> "I was really relieved when we talked about my needs. They were gracious...they took an interest in what I needed. I felt renewed after talking with them."

Rachel and one of the mentors talked "about six times" after school and on minimum days. She immediately used some of the mentor's ideas for handling her five "problem students" (e.g., a "behavior daily card" that was sent home) with some success. "I am now in constant touch with the parents of the particular students."

She was less successful in pursuing the mentor's ideas about language arts and creative writing.

> "I wished I could have talked with her more, but I didn't want to take up her time. I felt frustrated. What I needed couldn't be done in a few quick meetings; I needed too much help."

Dana's story illustrates how new teachers can be socialized to seek help from veterans. The vignette suggests that this teacher thrived on the support of other teachers. Perhaps most important, support was offered routinely, first in the form of a buddy, and then by other mentors in the school. Dana gained much from her interactions and from the classroom visits of her mentors: access to resources in the school district, knowledge and ideas for teaching, feedback on her performance, companionship from her mentor, and the motivation to continue high quality instruction. As Dana said, "I've been lucky."

With an initial sense of self efficacy in her teaching and continued support for collegial interaction, there is every reason to believe that Dana will continue to benefit from her colleagues in the years to come.

Unlike Dana, Rachel was socialized to the norm of isolation during her two years as a substitute teacher. It appears that support for teachers was neither a priority nor part of the routine business at her school. Without the mentor program and its accompanying "obligation" to help other teachers, Rachel may not have mustered the courage to seek the consultation she needed.

The vignette suggests that Rachel received only enough help to survive in her classroom. She did not pursue, nor was she offered, substantial support in improving her language arts curriculum. This was a missed opportunity.

## Experienced Teachers, Reassigned

### Patricia

After her assignment to a new grade level, Patricia sought help from the mentor who taught the same grade level and whose classroom was in the same part of the school. There was another mentor in the building, but her classroom was on the other side of the school; Patricia felt that the distance made it inconvenient to maintain contact.

Patricia felt very comfortable about asking the mentor for assistance. They had come to the school at the same time 10 years ago (when Patricia was a substitute), and the mentor had "offered her services to help me. She was always available. I never feel shunned by her."

In March, Patricia went to the mentor's classroom for two hours to observe her teaching reading, language arts, and math. They also worked together often on breaks. "We listen to each other. We exchange materials. We talk just about every day."

Patricia felt that the mentor had influenced her in many ways, but particularly with her reading program, discipline, and classroom organization. In a word, the mentor "simplified

things." She added, however, that the mentor program gave her the courage to ask the mentor teacher for help.

"I would never have asked [the mentor] if she wasn't paid and committed to being a mentor teacher. She was always willing, but I hated to impose on her before this year and the mentor teacher program...I feel lucky."

Rich

Rich was transferred to a new school in January. Unlike the schools where he had taught, the new school followed a mastery learning model that involved "lots of pre and post testing". The principal suggested that Rich contact two mentor teachers in the building, one in English and the other in Spanish, to help him set up his program.

Despite offers of assistance by the mentors from the beginning, Rich wanted to use his own resources to establish routines in the classroom. He found himself staying late at school every day and coming in on Saturdays, just to plan his program and finish the paper work. After a couple of months, however, he became depressed and realized that he needed help.

> "I needed someone to talk to. He [the mentor] had been asking if he could help me all along. I went to talk with him about my difficulties with my class. He understood it all."

They talked about Rich's attitude toward pressure and how he was handling it. Rich admitted that he was tense all the time and dealt with it by working long hours. The mentor helped Rich relax by emphasizing how difficult it was to come into a new school and new grade level in the middle of the year. He suggested that Rich concentrate on getting a few subjects organized first, and "let th others slide until he got a grip on the primary subjects."

Rich asked the mentor to come to his classroom to observe, which he did for two hours. After the visit the mentor gave Rich "a lot of constructive criticism and strokes." They planned to get together every few weeks. It never happened.

Rich said that the most important consequence of his interaction with the mentor was

> "...a release of tension...seeing that what I was going through was normal...I readjusted my goals...didn't stay at school so late or come in on Saturday. I just tried to relax."

These vignettes suggest that the mentor program provided the occasion for changing the norm of isolation to one of collegial

assistance. In the first case, by offering assistance and making herself and her classroom available to Patricia, the mentor was able to offer companionship, assurance, and new models of teaching through demonstration lessons. Further, their sustained informal conversations about mutual teaching experiences provided many opportunities for enriched thinking about their practices. It is possible, that, without the mentorship, Patricia would not have had the audacity to impose on one of her colleagues.

In the second case, Rich's strong belief that his own resources should enable him to make the transition to a very different teaching situation initially prevented him from seeking assistance from his colleagues, even when such assistance was offered. When Rich finally gained the courage to discuss his difficulties with a mentor teacher, he relaxed, gained confidence and assurance from constructive feedback, received "strokes" after a classroom visit, and readjusted his goals and tasks to his new teaching situation. This vignette illustrates the importance of the counselor role in a mentorship. Rich was able to express his frustration to a colleague in a safe environment.

Long Term Veterans

Laura

Laura has taught high school English for 35 years. Despite the availability of consultants through the district office, Laura has never called one; she preferred to rely on her own resources. This year marked a change. A new superintendent was hired whose mission was to improve classroom teaching. Moreover, principals and vice principals were called on to evaluate teachers more frequently and to assist them in implementing clinical teaching.

One day Laura was asked by the principal if she were interested in taking a course in Clinical Teaching. Shortly after she refused, she received an official letter from the district office saying that she was to observe a mentor's class for a day. Arrangements had already been made for a substitute. "There was nothing casual about it at all."

Laura said that she "dreaded" the visit. Besides the extra work of setting up a substitute for a particularly "difficult class," she had a strong aversion to going into another teacher's class.

> "I have a strong feeling about not dropping in and taking notes. It makes you seem like a spy, even if you're writing down nice things that are going on."

On the day of the visit, Laura initially saw herself as a "nuisance." She went out of her way to assure the mentor that she would not "be an albatross and hang around all day." To her "surprise and relief" the mentor was prepared for her visit and seemed pleased that someone would be his guest. He treated her as a peer, not as someone who needed assistance; Laura was grateful for that.

> "He recognized that I had as much experience as he had. He did not seem to feel obligated to point out how things ought to be done, but rather how things worked for him in his classes and school. I was very appreciative of that."

Laura said that she enjoyed her visit. She described the mentor as "calm and collected, demanding in a manly, quiet way." She was particularly impressed with the "simplicity of his presentations," and wondered if she confused her students by "giving them so much."

> "In my classes I am always trying to do more than is described to do. It seems so important for the students, but it may be more on a college level."

While reflecting about the consequences on her visit, Laura said that it gave her assurance; "whatever my lacks are, they aren't in ideas about presenting material." She referred to the classroom visit as a "present" because she had never visited another class before, and said that she would like an opportunity to visit an advanced class.

> "It wasn't like I came back and did the same things the mentor did; but rather, I had new-found assurance."

Laura reported her perceptions of the visit to the vice principal on the following day. According to Laura, that was the end of the matter.

George

George was the only teacher who taught auto mechanics at his high school. After 25 years of teaching, 15 in the same subject area, he was getting burned out. He felt isolated at school and was frustrated with the lack of support by the administration for what he was trying to do with his students. He also realized that his classes were not going so well, and traced his problems to the deaths of his parents in the past six years.

Thus George was not surprised when the new vice principal approached him and said that he had been asked to assist George. The VP admitted that he did not know anything about George's content area and he suggested that George contact a mentor from another school who taught the same subject. When asked if he were hesitant about requesting assistance, George said that he was not.

On the following day George went to the mentor's school. Without any specified agenda to talk from, the two men realized that they had many things in common. "We both like kids and teaching, and we both like auto mechanics." They also discovered that they had mutual problems. They planned to meet often. George spent a full day in the mentor's room; the mentor reciprocated with a full day in George's room. These visits were followed up with bi-monthly contacts after school throughout the rest of the year.

George felt that there were many consequences from his contact with the mentor teacher. First, the mentor teacher told George's vice principal that what George was doing was correct, "but it was a two-way street. He needed the support from the administration." The vice principal responded, "Since he's doing his best, I'll also try harder." One result of that interaction was that George had his shop painted.

Second, the mentor teacher influenced George's approach to teaching. He was trying to deal more effectively with the diversity of his students.

Finally, George said that he found a friend. He did not feel quite so isolated anymore.

At the end of the interview, George asked why it had taken so long to develop the mentor program.

> "We should have somebody we can go to and say, 'Can I as a teacher get some help?'"

These vignettes illustrate how a brokering arrangement from the district office or a principal can revitalize experienced teachers who are entrenched in their own teaching methods. For

Laura, who had resisted going to voluntary workshops in the past, the visit to a mentor's classroom appears to have created a new interest in seeing others' ways of teaching. Though she felt like a "jerk" to be forced into the situation, Laura became aware of a new model of teaching during a surprisingly pleasant visit to a mentor's classroom. While she may not have changed her own teaching as a result of this visit, she was open to future peer observations, and perhaps other kinds of assistance.

Laura's story illustrates how classroom observations can provide a relatively non-threatening vehicle for initiating instructional improvement. It also illustrates, however, the pitfalls that can occur from the lack of any follow-up. Though Laura was impressed with the simplicity of the mentor's presentations compared with her own -- maybe she tried to accomplish too much with her students -- she left the scene assured that whatever her "lacks" were, they did not lay in her presentations. The mentor's attempt to make her feel comfortable may have impeded the dissonance needed to stimulate self improvement. With continued administrative support for additional classroom observations and some delicate follow-up from mentor teachers, Laura could have been motivated to change some of her instructional strategies.

George's story describes how a principal's suggestion to see a mentor was both timely and constructive. George realized that he was "burned out." But his personal problems, the lack of administrative support for what he wanted to accomplish with his students, and his isolation from colleagues with whom he could share common interests prevented him from wanting to do anything

about it.

As a result of an extended relationship with his mentor teacher, George found a friend with whom he could discuss auto mechanics, and appeared stimulated to improve his instructional techniques. He acquired new models of teaching from observing the mentor's class, and received constructive feedback on his own performance. George also gained administrative support because of the mentor's intervention with the principal.

Summary. These vignettes exemplify a range of opportunities and pitfalls that the mentorship could provide when mentors offer credible assistance to teachers -- through consultation, classroom visits, demonstration lessons and workshops. Teachers will seek advice both when they experience difficulties and when they are eager to improve. Through extended relationships with their mentors, Dana, Patricia, and George expanded their thinking about their teaching practices. Rachel and Rich found companionship and assurance from their mentors, which helped them to survive in their classrooms. Laura became aware of a new model of teaching by watching a mentor in action. But the lack of any follow-up prevented any change in her motivation to improve.

## Teachers Learn from Their Mentors

These vignettes, a subset of twenty-one narratives in this case study, served to illustrate the circumstances of the mentor program from the perspective of the teachers involved. All of the teachers described in the vignettes show how the mentorship provided an opportunity to help teachers who were

experiencing some difficulty. The limitations of this paper prevent a discussion of how mentors can assist veteran teachers who were not in trouble. (See Hanson, Shulman, and Bird, 1985, for a description of the implementation of the mentor program in a district with primarily experienced teachers.)

The purpose of this section is to analyze how mentor teachers were helpful to all twenty-one teachers interviewed in the study. Our sample of teachers was equally divided among new teachers, reassigned teachers (either by school or subject), and experienced teachers. What were the consequences of the relationship on the teachers' work? How did these teachers characterize their mentors?

When asked about the consequences of their relationships with their mentors, teachers gave a variety of responses. We classified the teachers' responses into eight kinds of outcomes. The list progresses from less to more substantial kinds of assistance.

Access to resources. Five teachers said that mentors helped find materials and/or supplies in the building, or recommended certain workshops. These comments came from new teachers or from experienced teachers who were transferred to a new school.

Increased status with others. Five teachers stated that interactions with mentors altered their standing with others in the school. New teachers and experienced teachers new to a school reported that mentors helped them get acquainted with other teachers and intervened with the principal to obtain needed supplies. Other teachers said that their principal and some teachers showed approval for new teaching strategies that they learned from mentors.

Companionship and assurance. More than half of the teachers described the importance of companionship offered by mentors. Mentors helped them "to relax," and to have more confidence in their teaching ability.

Knowledge and ideas for teaching. More than one third of

the teachers said that they used a mentor's suggested teaching technique in their classroom. One teacher, who was assigned to teach a new content area, declared that his mentor taught him some basic concepts of the subject matter.

Access to models of teaching. Approximately one half of the teachers said that they became aware of new models of teaching from watching a mentor teach a class.

Adjustments to their tasks. Seven teachers described how they changed their teaching practices. Their reports ranged from changes in classroom presentations to differences in classroom management techniques.

Feedback on their performance. Three teachers said that mentors observed their class and gave constructive criticism on their teaching.

Support for thinking about teaching. Five teachers noted that mentors helped them analyze their teaching. For example, one teacher who had been a student teachers in her mentor's class, said, "I now understand why things were done in a special way."

Table 1 summarizes the consequences in relation to the kinds of exchanges that teachers had with their mentors (workshops, consultations, teachers visit a mentor's class, and mentors visit a teacher's class). Most of the outcomes were linked with teachers' consultations outside of class. Often these consultations were either preceded or followed by other kinds of exchanges (e.g., workshops and demonstration lessons were often preceded or followed by individual consultations). Further, some teachers described more than one outcome from their interactions with mentors.

Companionship and assurance was the most frequently reported consequence of the teachers' interactions with their mentors. Mentors provided teachers with a "sounding board" for new ideas and strategies for coping with problem students, all in a safe environment. Teachers took more risks with the support of their mentors. They often gained renewed confidence in their

Table 1

CONSEQUENCES OF MENTOR/TEACHER INTERACTION ACROSS FOUR CONTEXTS
(n=21 teachers)

| TEACHERS GAINED: | T Attended M's Workshop | M Consulted with T | T Visited M's Class | M visited T's Class | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Access to Resources | | 5 | | | 5 |
| Increased Status with Ts and Ps | 1 | 5 | 1 | | 7 (5)* |
| Companionship and Assurance | 2 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 19 (14)* |
| Knowledge & Ideas for Teaching | 5 | 3 | | | 8 |
| Access to Models of Teaching | 1 | 4 | 10 | 1 | 16 (10)* |
| Adjustment to their Tasks | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 10 (7)* |
| Feedback on their Performance | | | | 3 | 3 |
| Support for Thinking about Teaching | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 12 | 37 | 16 | 9 | |

T-teacher; M-mentor; P-principal

Some teachers describe more than one consequence of interaction with mentors.

* The number of responses in some rows is larger than the number of respondents, because some teachers interacted with their mentors in more than one context.

teaching ability. A few teachers said that they had found a friend. "She's my friend and that has meant everything. I know where to go if I need anything." For most of these teachers, the mentorship provided the opportunity to "break the loneliness" they felt in teaching.

The mentorship also provided many teachers with access to new models of teaching. Consistent with the district's focus on demonstration lessons as a way to "cut the isolation of teaching," teachers had many opportunities to watch their colleagues at work. Some teachers said that they used many of the mentors' techniques in their own classrooms. Almost half of these teachers called on the mentor teachers for individual advice.

Teachers said that considerably fewer mentors engaged them in reflection about their teaching practices or observed their classroom performance. The infrequency of these interactions is supported by other studies (Little, 1985; Hanson, Shulman, & Bird, 1985). [2] In Little's study of the Marin County Teacher Advisor Project, even in schools where teacher advisors worked regularly, interactions that brought advisors close to teachers' classroom performance or to teachers' thinking about teaching, were rare events. It is possible that teachers need more administrative support even to engage in such non-evaluative, non-threatening activities that could enrich their professional lives. [3]

## Mentors Work with Teachers: Difficulties and Frustrations

Until now I have focused on the opportunities that the

mentorship can provide to teachers. I will now comment briefly on the problems that mentors face in their new roles, because it will illuminate the magnitude of the mentors' task.

The California Mentor Teacher Program was a sizeable reform. Few precedents for teacher leadership existed to help districts define a mentorship. Yet, to qualify for funding, districts had to create a program, negotiate it with the local teachers' association, and select mentors within six months after the regulations were announced.

Thus it is not surprising that the CMTP had a rocky start. Teachers viewed the program with suspicion because it smacked of merit pay. Mentors were often selected without a clear view of their task. A number of problems were encountered that are likely to arise in other programs of this type. I have classified them into seven categories.

1. Hostility from Teachers. Mentors reported awareness of a small group of hostile teachers who had a negative reaction to the mentor program. They referred to "getting teased occasionally" and hearing "friendly jokes" about being a mentor. One mentor described an "undercurrent of bitterness" on the part of some teachers. Teachers say, "She is a mentor. What can you do for me? What does she do anyway?"

2. The Mentors' Dilemma. While the mentors were aware that the teachers with whom they worked appreciated their efforts, they were also aware of a larger group of teachers who did not know what mentors did. They continually had to make choices between spending enough time with an individual teacher to make a difference, and offering workshops "to reach thirty or forty

people instead of just one." Bird (1985) calls this conflict the "mentors' dilemma." "They [mentors] must do enough, well enough, and visibly enough to earn their unusual titles, pay, flexibility and resources...[Yet] if they assert themselves too strongly, or wrongly, they will be rude or disruptive" (p. 8).

3. Drumming up Business. Most of the mentors who offered voluntary assistance to teachers were perplexed about how to get started in their new role. They were uncomfortable about the need to drum up business, and spent many hours with their colleagues (other mentor teachers) deliberating about appropriate procedures. Often mentors viewed workshops and demonstration lessons as ways of marketing their skills.

4. Finding the Time. Some mentors found that they had so many requests, they had difficulty finding the time to both be responsible for the continuity of their own students' instruction and be responsive to teachers' requests. As one mentor said, "I can't keep up the pace I've been going at. I have been trying to decide what I might reduce."

5. The Battle for Subs. Many mentors were reluctant to leave their classrooms because they were not guaranteed quality substitutes. Often mentors said that their requests for subs were given a lower priority than those teachers who called in sick.

6. Term of Mentorship. All of the mentors we interviewed enjoyed their new responsibilities and status; few would be content to go back to the classroom full time. Some mentors expressed surprise at the limited term of mentorship (which varied among districts, but was limited to three years

with an opportunity to reapply).

7. Need for Training. Mentors were chosen for their demonstrated expertise in the classroom or with subject matter. Yet, they were often placed in new roles that required working with other teachers. They needed training in preparing workshops, conferencing, and coaching as well as in the research literature that provides the evidence that supports their ideas. As new roles for mentors emerge, adequate training must be responsive to the newly identified responsibilities.

## Conclusion

The mentorship has opened opportunities for teachers to assert leadership in their profession and to support school improvement. Mentors can transform the norm of isolation and autonomy to one of collegial interaction and assistance for all teachers. Mentors can use the opportunities of the mentorship to help all teachers extend their thinking about their teaching practices. But mentors cannot accomplish these feats merely by acquiring a title. They require appropriate training in educational theory, research, and principles of advising. Such training can enable them to go beyond their personal intuitions about good teaching practices. Even more important, they must be supported by substantial changes in school organization and support from the administration.

School organization must allow mentors to assist other teachers without feeling guilty that they are sacrificing the quality of education for their own students. For example, mentors should not have to battle for substitutes to provide supportive services; their

release time should be built into the organizational structure of the school.

Mentors can provide substantial assistance for other teachers, if needed changes are brought about. Without these, they will continue only to provide short-term assistance to large numbers of teachers. But they will never contribute to the more enduring effects on the induction of new teachers or the support of veterans initially envisioned in this particular reform.

## NOTES

1. Typically teachers work in isolation. While they see one another in the lunchroom, in staff meetings, and throughout the building, teachers seldom employ these interactions to discuss in depth matters of curriculum and instruction or to collaborate on shared problems. (Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser, 1986; Rosenholtz and Kyle, 1984). There are some exceptions; Little (1982) describes some schools where a norm of collegiality prevails. The culture of the school supports such activities as peer observation, providing constructive feedback, and collegial problem solving.

2. See Improved Teaching (Zumwalt, 1986) for descriptions of conferences based on classroom performance. Empowering teachers through collective analysis, reflection, and deliberation are common themes in many of the chapters.

3. The Rand Change Agent Study (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1979) suggests that the attitude of the building principal was crucial to the long-term results of a change-agent project.

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